

*Senior Home Safety Check
Do it today!*



**Senior Home
Safety Check**

**Southern Region
Emergency Medical
Services Council,
Inc**

**Providence Health
Care Systems**

Alaska Safe Kids

**Alaska's
Emergency
Medical Workers**

***How
Safe
is
Your
Home?***

**Contains a special section on
making your home safe for the
grandchildren!**



Every phase of a person's life brings new challenges, new opportunities and new risks.

Over the years by studying injury statistics, injury prevention experts can predict the kinds of injuries a person is most susceptible to according to his or her age. Much of what they've learned makes a lot of sense. For instance, infancy is a time for discovering a brand-new world. Babies learn about this new place through touch, sight, smell and taste. Children under the age of three are often in danger of swallowing poison or small household items because of their explorations.

An older toddler who is beginning to walk is in danger of falling, especially on stairs and off of furniture. As a teenager and young adults, risk-taking behavior becomes a threat. Unsafe driving, sports, drinking and drugs are major factors in injury and death. In Alaska for the 15 to 34 age group, suicide and suicide attempts are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal hospitalized injuries. (*Serious and Fatal Child and Adolescent Injuries in Alaska 1994-1998*)

As an adult grows older and slows down, they tend to spend more time at home. Things come full circle and falling again becomes a big threat. The environment becomes a major factor in how injury-free he or she will be. In the 35 to 64 age group, falls are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal hospitalized injuries in Alaska (*Serious and Fatal Child and Adolescent Injuries in Alaska 1994-1998*). About half of the elderly deaths in the nation involve falls in the home. Of these, about 75 percent could have been prevented by making their home more safe.

Emergency medical service providers see the pain associated with falls and other injuries that stem from an unsafe home. That's why EMS has teamed with ALASKA SAFE KIDS to bring this home safety checklist to you. So please take a moment to test your home or the home of someone you love.

In case you haven't guessed already, the answer to each of the questions in this booklet should be:

☒ Yes ☐ No

To obtain the safety and resource guide, **Planning to Avoid Childhood Emergencies**, contact:

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CHILDREN

*ALASKA SAFE
KIDS can help you
make your home
safe for young
visitors. Call your
hospital or clinic for
the local SAFE
KIDS' number.*

Do you keep all shampoos,
cleansers, and other toxic
materials in their own
well-marked bottles?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you test children's toys for
safety by using a choke tube to
be sure they can't be easily
swallowed?

☐ Yes ☐ No

*A 35 mm film canister can substitute
as a choke tube in many cases. Any
toy that can easily fit into the cannister
can also easily become lodged in a
child's throat.*

Are gates installed at the top of
stairs to guard against falls?

☐ Yes ☐ No

table of

CONTENTS

Kitchen	4
Bathroom	7
Bedroom	9
General	10
Habits	15
Emergency	16
Children	17
Answers	19

CHILDREN

Do you keep cabinets and drawers locked?

Yes _____ No _____

Many children's toy stores, clothing stores, and national drug stores, have cabinet and drawer locks that can be easily installed when children are present and removed when they are no longer necessary.

Do you keep sharp knives off the countertops?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you keep matches, cigarettes, and lighters out of the reach of children?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you avoid taking medicine in front of young children?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you keep medicine cabinets locked?

Yes _____ No _____

Many seniors spend countless hours with their grandchildren and other young friends. If you ever have young visitors in your home, look at these questions and make sure it's as safe for children as it is for adults.

NEVER refer to medicine as candy or say that it tastes good. Children love to imitate those they admire. Many medicines resemble candy so children can be easily tempted or confused.

KITCHEN

Is there good lighting over the stove, counters, and sink?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you keep drawers and cupboards closed to avoid bumping into them?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you store toxic products like household cleaners and laundry safely by storing them separately from food?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you keep toxic products in their original containers with their original labels?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you store often used items like housewares and food in easy to reach spots?

Yes _____ No _____

Cleaning supplies can be mistaken for other products when colors or shapes are similar.

Anyone who spends time in the kitchen is aware of how dangerous this room can be! Hot food, open flames, poisonous and flammable materials, slippery floors, and more. They're all in the kitchen.

These questions will help you test your kitchen. They'll also give you some ideas on what you can change to make your kitchen safer.

EMERGENCY

When posting emergency numbers be sure to include the phone number of a close relative or a neighbor. Include your own telephone number, address and directions to your home. Have at least one phone located on a low surface so you can reach it if you are unable to stand.

Develop a system with a friend or neighbor that you check in with each other on a regular basis, preferably at a similar time each day.

Are emergency numbers posted near every telephone in your home?

___Yes ___No

Do you have a plan for getting help easily in an emergency?

___Yes ___No

Have you planned and practiced an escape route to be used in the event of a fire?

___Yes ___No

KITCHEN

Always secure long sleeves with a rubber bands or pins when cooking.

Do you use appliances safely?

- Do you unplug them when not in use?
___Yes ___No
- Do you keep them away from the stove?
___Yes ___No

Do you keep electrical cords away from the sink?

___Yes ___No

Cords can be damaged by excess heat. Electrical appliances and power cords can cause shock or even electrocution if they get wet.

Do you always use a sturdy stool to reach items in upper cabinets?

___Yes ___No

KITCHEN

Never put water on a grease fire! It will splatter and spread to other areas.

Make sure you have a GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) installed in any room with a faucet.

Do you know what to do if there is a kitchen fire?

- Do you cover the pan with a lid when there is a stovetop fire?

Yes _____ No _____

- Do you close the door and turn off the oven when there is an oven fire?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you reduce your risk of slipping by wiping up grease, water, and other spilled liquids or foods immediately?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you use a non-slip wax (no wax is best) or a self-secured carpet on the floor?

Yes _____ No _____

Don't walk on a wet floor!

HABITS

WATCH your personal habits!

Some of the simplest things can be the most effective in keeping you FREE OF INJURY!

Do you wear comfortable low-heeled shoes with good traction?

Yes _____ No _____

Are the hems of your clothes short enough to prevent tripping?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you get up slowly from a sitting or lying position to avoid becoming dizzy?

Yes _____ No _____

Many falls occur when people get up too quickly when rising from a sitting position. Sit up a moment before getting out of bed. Stand up for a moment before you begin walking.

Do you carry small loads especially when using stairs rather than carrying too much.

Yes _____ No _____

GENERAL

When you select carpet, avoid dark, deep pile or busy patterns for stairways. These features will make it difficult to see the outline of the steps and make a fall more likely.

Do you have two sturdy easy grip handrails fastened securely running continuously from the top to the bottom of the stairs?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you make sure the outline of each step is easy to see?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Are your stairs in good repair with even surfaces (no rubber mats or metal strips that can cause tripping)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you have light switches at the bottom and top of each stairway?

☐ Yes ☐ No

BATHROOM

If you slip and fall anywhere in your house, it will likely be in the bathroom.

Though this room is also potentially dangerous, there are many simple things you can do to guard against getting hurt.

Use a bath thermometer to test water temperature. Let the water run for three minutes before testing. Always check water temperature before entering the bathtub or shower.

Do you keep towels, shampoo, and soap within easy reach of the bathtub or shower?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you avoid the use of bath oil and creams in the shower or tub?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Are there non-skid mats or appliqués placed in your bathtub or shower?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you have grab bars to help you get in and out of the tub?

Do you use a bath chair or stool when bathing?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is your home hot water heater adjusted to a safe temperature (110° - 120°F)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

BATHROOM

Are hairdryers, radios, and electric shavers used and then stored away from water?

Yes _____ No _____

Are appliances unplugged after use?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you have a GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) on your bathroom outlets?

Yes _____ No _____

Are space heaters kept out of the bathroom?

Yes _____ No _____

Are you able to get on and off the toilet easily?

Yes _____ No _____

INSTALL A GRAB BAR NEXT TO THE TOILET!

A plugged-in electrical appliance (even if it is not turned on) may cause a deadly shock if it falls in the water.

GENERAL

If you smoke, do you use deep ashtrays with grooves for cigarettes?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you remember to never smoke in bed or when drowsy?

Yes _____ No _____

Are you careful to never leave lit cigarettes in the ashtray?

Yes _____ No _____

NEVER place throw rugs at the bottom of stairways.

Do you keep your stairs safe more safe by keeping them free of clutter?

Yes _____ No _____

Do your stairs have good lighting?

Yes _____ No _____

GENERAL

Stepping on extension cords repeatedly can damage them and cause a fire hazard!

Do you replace electrical or extension cords that are frayed and worn?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you place cords out of the flow of traffic to avoid tripping?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you careful not to overload outlets or extension cords?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you have a GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) in your kitchen and bathroom?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you periodically check all plugs and switches in your home to be sure they are cool to the touch?

☐ Yes ☐ No

BEDROOM

For safety, keep a nightlight on in the hallway or bathroom.

Is there a clear, well-lit path leading from the bedroom to the bathroom?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you have a light or a flashlight within easy reach of the bed?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is there a telephone within easy reach of the bed?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you know to never tuck your electric blanket under the mattress?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you try to never keep anything on top of the electric blanket?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Keep emergency numbers by the telephone

GENERAL

Is there a smoke detector installed on each floor including one near the sleeping quarters? _____ Yes _____ No

Are smoke detectors checked monthly? _____ Yes _____ No

Are batteries replaced as needed, and at least once a year? _____ Yes _____ No

Remember, space heaters use a lot of electricity!

Do you keep your space heater 36 inches away from furniture, curtains, and other flammable objects? _____ Yes _____ No

Use your birthday, anniversary or another special day as your yearly reminder to change smoke detector batteries.

Change the batteries on that day, every year!

Are scatter rugs and runners tacked or taped down or slip resistant? _____ Yes _____ No

Are carpets in good condition without any worn or frayed sections? _____ Yes _____ No

Is a light within easy reach when entering each room? _____ Yes _____ No

Are paths through rooms well lit and free of obstructions? _____ Yes _____ No

Make sure any handyman or repairman you hire is licensed and bonded. Ask for referrals from friends. Always get more than one estimate.

GENERAL

Avoid using scatter rugs if possible. If you do use them, secure them with double-faced carpet tape to avoid slipping.